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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000559

DEPARTMENT FOR DS/IP/WHA, DS/IP/ITA, AND BOLIVIAN DESK
OFFICER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/09/2019

TAGS: ASEC PGOV SNAR BL

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT REGARDING
LOCAL GUARD PROGRAM

Classified By: RSO Patrick J. Moore for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (SBU) On 04/07/09, Charge d,Affaires (CDA) Krishna Urs, RSO Patrick Moore and Local Guard Program (LGP) Coordinator Fernando Gonzalez met with the Minister of Government (MOG) Alfredo ((RADA)); Vice-Minister of Interior Regime and Police, Marcos ((FARFAN)); and Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hugo ((FERNANDEZ)) to discuss the recent decision by Rada to arbitrarily remove immediately the senior Bolivian National Police (BNP) officers assigned to the U.S. Mission and to attempt to establish an acceptable timeframe transition to minimize the impact his actions will make on the mission,s security operations. In addition, this meeting was to address Rada,s decision to limit BNP officers to serve a maximum of only two (2) years at the U.S. Mission (yet they serve up to ten (10) years at other embassies).

¶2. (SBU) CDA Urs explained the reasons why it is of utmost importance for the US Embassy to maintain a well trained, experienced BNP security officers assigned the U.S. Mission installations. CDA Urs provided details of the number and functions of the BNP officers currently assigned to the U.S. Mission from both the State and Private BNP Physical Security Battalion (PSB). He provided details on the amounts of money annually paid to the BNP (over USD \$2 million) for the various LGP operations and a breakdown of BNP officers rotated over the past five years proving compliance to the BNP regulations for the rotation of personnel.

¶3. (C) For continuity purposes, CDA Urs requested that BNP officers assigned to the U.S. Mission remain for a period of eight (8) years, during which the officers would have been rotated every two (2) years among the different security areas/groups within the Mission. This rotation allow the officers to learn different aspects pertaining to the security of the Embassy, such as serving as the Controlled Access Centers (CACs), Mobile/Roving Patrol, Dispatchers, COM Bodyguards, Regional Office Supervisors, and Group Supervisors. Surveillance Detection (SD) was purposely not mentioned in this meeting due to earlier accusations made by MOG Rada that SD was used by the U.S. Mission to spy on the Bolivian Government (but confusing their operations with the name/roll of Roving Patrol).

¶4. (SBU) CDA Urs then requested that rotation of the five (5) remaining senior BNP officers (down from six (6) officers since one was sent back to his command the same day as the meeting) be staggered in order to minimize the operational impact of the security operations and to permit Post to recruit and train their replacements accordingly. In an attempt to show good faith, CDA Urs issued a personal invitation to MOG Rada and the two attending Vice-Ministers to visit U.S. Embassy La Paz for a tour and to show them the BNP posts.

¶5. (SBU) MOG Rada responded by stating that the Government of Bolivia (GOB) did not intend to weaken the security of the U.S. Embassy. He denied our request to stretch out the reassignment of the remaining five (5) officers with more than ten (10) years of service at the U.S. Embassy, saying that they would be transferred to their battalion immediately for onward assignment. However, he committed to retain these

officers in La Paz and detail them part-time back to the Embassy to help with the transition. While Rada said that he would continue to apply BNP rules mandating a change in posting every two (2)years, he said that he would not/not remove another 25 officers at the Embassy that currently have more than two (2)years service. He said that he wanted the Embassy to have a pool of experienced officers to choose from in selecting BNP leadership at the Embassy. He also stated that there is a possibility of not removing more officers for the time being and to consider allowing officers to remain at the U.S. Embassy for more than 2 years since this is something that he currently does with his own security detail.

¶6. (SBU) Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) and Eradication As per NAS request, CDA Urs outlined the logistical support NAS provides to GOB eradication efforts. He explained that NAS continues to provide logistical support to both the Chapare and Yungas regions. Rada stated that NAS had not provided eradication support in the Chapare region since February. CDA Urs countered that this was inaccurate and that NAS never stopped supporting GOB eradication efforts and that on February 18, NAS, in coordination with the GOB, initiated a new rotation of eradicators in the Chapare and Yungas regions. He said it is necessary to have the Letter of Agreement (LOA) signed as soon as possible in order for NAS to continue with their assistance. Rada then asked Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs FERNANDEZ to ensure that the LOA (which is signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs) was signed as soon as possible. (Note: The Embassy received signed originals of the LOA in Spanish and English on April 18. End Note.) A letter summarizing the most important points discussed in this meeting (and an invitation to visit the U.S. Embassy and Rada's commitments) will be sent to MOG Rada.

¶8. (C) SUMMARY: While the meeting was cordial, Post does not know how long these senior BNP officers will be allowed to help their replacements settle into their positions. In fact, Post is not entirely certain that Rada will keep his commitment to provide these officers on a part-time basis to help their replacements settle in. In the past, some BNP officers assigned to the U.S. Mission have been interrogated and threatened by the MOG to provide sensitive information for the GOB to exploit in the media against the US Government.

URS